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THE UKRAINE PROBLEM
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REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS
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THE UKRAINE PROBLEM

AN ANSWER TO LEON TROTSKY'S POLEMIC

Ed. Note: The article below is an answer to Leon Trotsky's rebuttal to an original article that appeared in what was then our theoretical organ the MARXIST. We reprinted this article in our last issue. To follow through we now reprint our rebuttal to Trotsky which appeared in the November, 1939 issue of INTERNATIONAL NEWS. The following article assumes greater importance when viewed from the point of the present practical errors his followers of the "Fourth International" Cannonites, are making in their support of Tito and related movements. These stem from the original theoretical errors that Trotsky made more than ten years ago.

Due to the outbreak of the second world imperialist war and the dismemberment of Poland by the Stalin-Hitler agreement, the question of the Ukraine is now posed more sharply than ever as the key to Eastern Europe. The struggle raging around the Ukraine will inevitably become more intense. To a great extent, the solution of this question will determine either Hitler's line of march to the East or the fate of the Soviet Union.

An analysis of our differences with Trotsky on the theoretical problems involved will clearly reveal the differences between nationalistic centrism (Trotsky) and proletarian revolutionary internationalism (the Revolutionary Workers League). In the Socialist Appeal of May 9th, Trotsky first presented his call for separation of the Soviet Ukraine from the USSR. We presented a brief reply to his false line in the Marxist of July. Now Trotsky enters into vicious polemics (Socialist Appeal of September 15th and 18th), wherein he uses strong language and weak arguments. We regret that a man of Trotsky's experience in the revolutionary movement neither quotes our position correctly nor argues against our position. Not only does he use false arguments, but he sets up straw men to argue against.

AGAINST THE SEPARATION OF THE UKRAINE FROM THE SOVIET UNION

First Trotsky points out that we are opposed to his slogan for the separation of the Ukraine from the Soviet Union. And then Trotsky speaks of us and says: "He is for the world revolution and for socialism--'root and branch' ". This leaves the impression on the reader that we counterposed to his false slogan the demand for the world revolution. We are for the world revolution; however, we counterposed to Trotsky's slogan, not the world revolution abstractly, but a CONCRETE LINE of march for the present situation. The following position on this question, from the MARXIST of July which Trotsky ignores is as follows:

"Enmeshed in capitalist contradictions in Western Ukraine, confronted with Stalinist degeneration within Soviet Ukraine, with both sections beaten down under the hammer blows of the imperialist struggle for the redivision of the world, the problem of the Ukraine calls for special attention. The policy the revolutionary Marxists present is first and foremost the independent action of the working class. This is possible only on the basis of the political and organizational independence of the revolutionary Marxian

organization. In Western Ukraine this independent class action calls for those steps that prepare the class in action for the social revolution. In the time element it makes no difference where the workers are successful first, in the social revolution of Western Ukraine or in the political revolution of Soviet Ukraine. In the Soviet Ukraine this independent class action calls for such a political revolution and the EXTENSION of this workers' victory to the rest of the Soviet Union and for the social revolution internationally. Only on this basis can the working class EXTEND THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION."

Does this position in any way sound as though we are counterposing the sectarian position of world revolution to a concrete, but false slogan? No, it is a concrete but different line of march.

IF THE WORKERS OVERTHROW STALINISM

Next, Trotsky takes a sentence out of our document which, in part states: "If the workers overthrow Stalinism....." And Trotsky reports: "But Stalinism must first be overthrown". And, Trotsky says, the slogan of the separation of the Ukraine from the Soviet Union is HOW to accomplish this. He states: "And in order to achieve this (the overthrow of Stalinism-Ed) one must not shut one's eyes to the growing separatist tendencies in the Ukraine, but rather give them correct political expression".

In the first place, this slogan for the separation of the Ukraine is not the workers' road to overthrowing Stalinism. What is important in this quotation of ours that Trotsky uses is the whole argument that precedes it and the reason we used this argument. Let us deal with this aspect. In the MARXIST the quotation Trotsky plays with is immediately preceded by an excerpt from Trotsky's original article in which he states (and we reproduce it here):

"In the face of such an internal situation (degeneration under Stalinism) it is naturally impossible to even talk of Western Ukraine voluntarily joining the USSR as it is at present constituted. Consequently the unification of the Ukraine presupposes freeing the so-called Soviet Ukraine from the Stalinist boot."

The line of argument used by Trotsky is that a united Ukraine PRESUPPOSES the separation of the Soviet Ukraine. Trotsky in his original quotation, not we in our reply, starts with the premise that after the workers political revolution against Stalinism is completed in the Soviet Ukraine, then we shall separate. Our position, and the quotation Trotsky uses makes this clear, that we present the opposite line of march---if the political revolution against Stalinism in the Ukraine is successful, we shall drive deeper. The next sentence of our article on the extension of the political revolution, which Trotsky does not quote, is as follows:

"If the workers regain their position in the Soviet Ukraine before the proletarian revolution in Western Ukraine they should DRIVE DEEPER INTO THE SOVIET UNION AGAINST STALINISM and the other imperialist agents." (emphasis in the original.)

Why then does Trotsky take one sentence from our article and talk about our position "if there is a revolution" when in his preceeding

quotation, this, is HIS position. And the polemic on this question as our first article, quoted above, clearly shows is not over the first aspect but the second aspect of the question. Trotsky says separation if we gain workers rule in the Ukraine, we say use the base of re-established workers Soviets to drive deeper into the whole of the Soviet Union to dislodge Stalinism. We repeat, we will come back later to the first part of the question---the line of march for a political revolution in Russia.

Again let us quote Trotsky and our comment, not from his polemic against us, but from his first article, from which the following quotation is reproduced from our first article:

"Trotsky says: 'The question of first order is the revolutionary guarantee of the unity and independence of a workers' and peasants' Ukraine in the struggle against imperialism, on the one hand, and against Moscow Bonapartism, on the other.' This is begging the question. This 'first order' of Trotsky is about the tenth order. To have a unified and independent Ukraine, the workers and peasants must succeed with a proletarian revolution in three capitalist countries, and must carry through a political revolution in Soviet Ukraine."

This quotation reveals that in our first article against Trotsky we argue against the position of his FIRST order of unity and point out that before such UNITY there must be a revolution, and a revolution in several places. In his reply he accuses us of what we previously exposed as his position.

HOW TO DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION.

In our first article, immediately following the quotation dealing with the question of "presupposing", is the following sentence: "Not turning our backs on the Soviet Union, but its regeneration and reestablishment as a mighty citadel of world revolution---that is the road of Marxism."

Trotsky quotes this sentence from our document and then claims our position logically leads to this: "With this method, but with far greater logic, one might say, 'Not defending a degenerated Soviet Union is our task, but the victorious world revolution which will transform the whole world into a World Soviet Union.' etc. Such aphorisms come cheap". We don't know where Trotsky got the second cheap quotation but we do know that it fits his position like a glove and has nothing in common with the first quotation of ours.

Our position is not to separate a section of the Soviet Union where the workers carry through a political revolution, not to turn our backs, but instead DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION by extending that partial victory TO THE REST OF THE SOVIET UNION AND RE-ESTABLISHING A GENUINE worker's democracy. The second idea, which belongs to Trotsky, states just the opposite---"not defending a degenerate Soviet Union."

The separation of the Soviet Ukraine which according to Trotsky is FIRST necessary before there can be a united Ukraine---is the position of NO DEFENSE of the Soviet Union. And secondly, this "cheap aphorism" of Trotsky's is the position of the Ultra-Lefts. It is not our position. Any-one who is half-way familiar with the R.W.L. literature

on the Soviet Union knows that we stand for the defense of the Soviet Union.

Twice, in the first column of the article in polemics against us Trotsky tries to make us out as sectarians, ultra-lefts, but both times he DOES NOT PRESENT OUR POSITION. This is a necessary introduction to his article to prepare the groundwork for his readers so he can present his CENTRIST POSITION against our Marxist position and already have his readers convinced that the position he is arguing against is ultra-left, sectarianism.

SEPARATION AN ASSET OR A LIABILITY TO WHOM ?

Trotsky says: "Assuredly, the separation of the Ukraine is a liability as compared with a voluntary and equalitarian socialist federation; but it will be an unquestionable asset as compared with the bureaucratic strangulation of the Ukrainian people."

What Trotsky says is true, but this is not the main axis for the workers or for the Marxists. More important than the fact that separation is an asset to the Ukrainian people, is the effects of separation on the WORKERS and the DEFENSE of WHAT REMAINS OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION. Again we must say that the workers' of Russia against Stalinism - - - as well as outward towards Western Ukraine. This is the real defense of the Soviet Union.

ECONOMICS AND THE SLOGAN OF SEPARATION

"The economy of the Soviet Union enters integrally into this plan," says Trotsky. The planned economy of the Soviet Union may be affected by the separation, he says, but "an economic plan is not the holy of holies". In this argument he ridicules us because we "forgot" the economic aspect of the question. Trotsky should know that there is no solution to the economy of backward Soviet Ukraine on the basis of the slogan of separation.

In either case, a proletarian revolution in Western Ukraine or a political revolution, or both at once, calls for a drive INWARD into the rest of the Soviet Union against Stalinism as well as against the Imperialists, in order to solve any of the economic problems confronting the Soviet Ukraine as well as the rest of the Soviet Union. To tell the workers and peasants of the Soviet Ukraine that they must separate to better their economic position because the bureaucrats have warped the plan is false. To tell them to oust the bureaucrats and take power in the Soviet Ukraine and use this as a lever to extend the political revolution to the rest of Russia and to correct the PLAN not only in relation to the Ukraine but to the whole of the Soviet Union is the correct relation of the plan to the Ukraine.

It is not the PLAN, as Trotsky claims, that is the more important economic aspect of the question of the right of self-determination. More important than the question of a plan and its break-down under Stalinism with its negative effects upon the national problem, is the question of the PROPERTY RELATIONS. We did deal with the decisive economic aspects, but Trotsky ignored our argument. We stated in the MARXIST that: "The right of self-determination under capitalism and the right of self-determination under the Soviet rule do not have the same axis."

What is the different axis? The property relations. Separation of the colonies under capitalist economy from the imperialist mother country further disrupts and accelerates the conditions for revolution. But to use the slogan of the right of self determination under the property relations of the Soviet Union is to negate the whole concept of Marxism on this question as presented by Lenin.

To issue a slogan for separation of national minorities under a capitalist economy and under the different property relations in the Soviet Union are two different things. Trotsky does not see this difference and criticizes us for not considering the economic relations!

WORKERS VS. PETTY BOURGEOIS IN THE UKRAINE

In his polemic Trotsky extends his error in attempting to answer us. What he only implied in his first article he now states clearly in this series of articles. For example: "only a direct and bold posing of the Ukrainian question in the given concrete circumstances will facilitate the rallying of the petty-bourgeois and peasant masses around the proletariat just as in Russia in 1917."

We agree that the agrarian problem and the national problem have not been solved and especially not under Stalinism, which has aggravated all the contradictions. But that is not the dispute now. The question is: do you ELEVATE an AUXILIARY SLOGAN to win allies above the line of march for the WORKING CLASS? The first quotation we present in this article from the Marxist clearly shows that our line of march is the independence of the working class in action. The national minority and the peasants will be won as allies only on this basis. Trotsky turns this concept upside down and places the interests of the petty-bourgeois in the Ukraine above the interests of the PROLETARIAT, and the defense of the Soviet Union. We counter pose to Trotsky's Ukrainian nationalism, proletarian internationalism.

Let us give some more quotations along this same line from Trotsky "This means that the proletarian vanguard has let the Ukraine national movement slip out of its hands and that this movement has developed far on the road to separatism." There is a "growing strength of separatist tendencies among the Ukrainian masses". "The great mass of the Ukrainian people are dissatisfied with their national fate and wish to change it drastically."

Trotsky correctly sees the EFFECTS of Stalinism upon the Ukraine section of the Soviet Union, the degeneration and development of nationalist tendencies. But one does not eliminate the CAUSE---Stalinism as the agent of the imperialists---by CAPITULATING to the nationalist tendencies. *To use the slogan of the right of self determination and the national question for Ukraine separation from the Soviet Union.

We have pointed out before that this slogan is a part of our strategy to win allies, that it is not a principled question, and that at certain times under certain circumstances we reject the use of separation because it plays into the hands of the imperialists. The independence of the Ukraine plays into the hands of the different imperialists

 **To use the slogan of the right of self determination and the national question to DISRUPT IMPERIALISM, to weaken imperialism, is not the same as to use the national question for Ukraine separation from the S.U.

just as much as did the separation of Sudetenland or Danzig at the moment. On this basis Stalinism would gain too by revealing what the slogan will accomplish. That is the reason we stated that separatism plays into the hands of Stalinism, a statement which Trotsky ridicules.

LENIN ON THE UKRAINE

Clarity can be of tremendous value to us here. Let us briefly review Lenin's line for the Ukraine (i.e., for national minorities in a Workers State). In his speech of March 19, 1919, replying to discussion of the proposed new party program (at the Sixth Congress of the C.P. S.U.), comrade Lenin summarized the Ukrainian national problem in a manner totally alien to Trotsky's approach:

"The Ukraine was separated from Russia by exceptional circumstances, and the national movement did not take deep root there. In so far as it did manifest itself it was knocked out by the Germans. This is a fact, but an exceptional fact. Even with the language there the position is such that it has become uncertain whether the Ukrainian language is the mass language or not."

Going one step further we examine the theses of the Second World Congress of the Communist International on the national question. Sections 7 and 8 clearly present the proletarian view on national federation in a workers society:

"The federative principle appears to us a transitional form toward unity of the workers of all countries. The federative principle has already practically demonstrated its conformity to the end pursued, just as much in course of the relations between the Russian Socialist Federated Republics and the other Soviet Republics (Hungarian, Finnish, Lithuanian, in the past; Azergaidjan and Ukrainian at present) as in the heart of the Russian Republic itself, with regard to the nationalities which formerly had neither a state nor an autonomous existence (e.g., the autonomous republics of the Bashkires and the Tartars, created in Soviet Russian in 1919 and 1920).

"The task of the Communist International is to study and verify the experience (and the further development) of these new federations based on the Soviet form and the Soviet movement. Since we consider the federation a transitional form toward complete unity, it is necessary for us to work toward a closer and closer federative union, bearing in mind: 1) the impossibility of defending (without the closest union among them) the Soviet republics surrounded by imperialist enemies who are infinitely superior in military power; 2) the need for a closer economic union of the Soviet republics, without which the rebuilding of the productive forces destroyed by imperialism, and the security and well-being of the workers cannot be assured; 3) the tendency for the realization of a universal economic plan whose regular application could be controlled by the proletariat of all countries, a tendency which made itself evident under the capitalist regime and which certainly ought to continue its development and reach perfection under the Socialist regime."

Bearing the above in mind we continue with Trotsky's quotations: Have Stalin and his Ukrainian satraps succeeded in convincing

the Ukrainian masses of the superiority of Moscow centralism over Ukrainian independence or have they failed? This question is of decisive importance. Yet our author does not even suspect its existence."----- says Trotsky.

To Marxists the axis is not "Moscow centralism"(reformism) vs. "Ukrainian independence(centrism). To us the question of workers democracy vs. Moscow centralism is the correct axis.

Within the framework of our road to state power and the ousting of Stalinism is the strategical line of SMASHING DEEPER INTO THE SOVIET UNION on the basis of gaining a foothold in any area. This calls for a struggle to re-establish workers democracy and not separatism.

But Trotsky places the Ukraine petty-bourgeois interests(separation) ABOVE the interests of the working class(workers democracy). We may state that the struggle for workers democracy is a part of the problem of the road to power, the REAL DEFENSE OF THE SOVIET UNION.

All of these above quotations reveal that the AUXILIARY PROBLEM made the main problem by Trotsky who turns upside down the relation of forces in the line of march to overthrow Stalinism and places the petty-bourgeois line above the working class line.

THE ROAD TO POWER

Trotsky says: "The slogan of independent Ukraine advanced in time by the proletarian vanguard will lead to the unavoidable stratification of the petty bourgeois and render it easier for its lower tiers to ally themselves with the proletariat." Only thus is it possible to prepare the proletarian revolution." Trotsky speaks of the proletarian revolution. Does this mean that a proletarian revolution is needed in the Soviets, that capitalism exists there? If so, this is the Ultra-Left position. Has Trotsky changed his position on Russia? Or does this mean the slogan of the independence of the Soviet Ukraine will help the proletarian revolution in Western Ukraine? But Trotsky says in the original article the following: "Consequently the unification of the Ukraine presupposes freeing the so-called Soviet Ukraine from the Stalinist boot." On Trotsky's basis then, it does mean FIRST a political revolution in the Soviet Union, and THEN a proletarian revolution.

However, in this article, the second article, Trotsky is shifting his position. He would like to forget the first article where the united Ukraine PRESUPPOSES the separation of the Soviet sector. In the second article he speaks of the proletarian revolution, which can only mean the Western Ukraine. But in retreating to the position where he states, he accuses us of what he is guilty of.

If Trotsky rejects his false formulations which he tries to pass off to us through only partial quotations from our article, and instead states that the separation of the Soviet Ukraine in TIME ELEMENT will run parallel to the revolution in Western Ukraine (and that the unity of the Ukraine does not, therefore, PRESUPPOSE freeing the so-called Soviet Ukraine from the Stalinist boot) then Trotsky must state the following thought, which is nowhere to be found in his original article or reply: The slogan for an independent Ukraine is necessary to arouse the petty-bourgeois and peasant masses as an ALLY of the proletariat,

to placate their present course of extreme nationalism, in the struggle of the workers in WESTERN Ukraine to carry through a proletarian revolution. In carrying through this proletarian revolution in Western Ukraine we must demand of our forces in the Soviet Union that they also advocate, on the basis of a political revolution, the separation of the Soviet there TOO. THE INDEPENDENT SOVIET UKRAINE WILL work out its own relations with the Russian, Soviet, the Polish Soviet, etc.,.

But Trotsky has already declared that the action for the slogan for separation from Russia and the unification of the Ukraine is "the basic fact underlying the whole problem." This means that the national question is placed as point number 1 against the above arguments; because our above arguments use the proletarian interests as point number 1.

In reality it means that Trotsky has presented not variants but more than one position on the same question, none of which are correct.

First, he presented the position that unification presupposes the separation of the Soviet Ukraine section from Stalin's state. Second, he states a parallel relation between the (political) revolution in Russia and the (social) revolution in Western Ukraine; but he ignores this question of the social (Western Ukraine) and the second position which states that "only thus is it possible to prepare the proletarian revolution", thus ignores the political revolution in Russia.

Third, he elevates the AUXILIARY SLOGAN to win ALLIES for the proletariat as the "basic fact", as the "question of decisive importance."

Fourth, and not least, Trotsky presents still a different position. A position that one could agree with and in no way agree with the slogan for separation or his other positions. Trotsky calls this the "ideal variant". Let us quote him in full:

"Let us take an ideal variant most favorable for our critic. The revolution occurs simultaneously in all parts of the Soviet Union. The The bureaucratic octopus is strangled and swept aside. The Constituent Congress of the Soviets is on the order of the day. The Ukraine expresses a desire to determine anew here relations with the USSR. Even our critic, let us hope, will be ready to extend her that right. But in order to possess the right of saying yes or no, the Ukraine must return to herself the complete freedom of action, at least for the duration of this Constituent period. There can be no other name for this than state independence. Now let us further suppose that the revolution embraces simultaneously also Poland, Roumania and Hungary. All sections of the Ukrainian people become free and enter into negotiations to join the Soviet Ukraine. At the same time they all express the desire to have their say on the question of the interrelations between unified Ukraine and the Soviet Union, with Soviet Poland, etc. It is self-evident that to decide all these questions it will be necessary to convene the Constituent Congress of Unified Ukraine. But a "Constituent" Congress signifies nothing else but the Congress of an independent state which prepares anew to determine its own domestic regime as well as its international position."

Why should Trotsky bring in this argument in the polemic with us, since it was not in his first article, unless it is a POLEMIC AGAINST US, or at least unless he wants to leave the impression on his readers that this argument adds another nail to our political coffin, and reveals our ignorance of the question? In fact, that is exactly why this argument, this "ideal variant" is brought in. At the same time it is a cover-up for his other false positions. This position speaks of a POLITICAL revolution throughout the Soviet Union and the ousting of Stalinism, and a social revolution in the countries of Eastern Europe, etc.

But the minute this "ideal variant" is co-ordinated with Trotsky's LINE on the question of the separation of the Soviet Ukraine, the ideal variant is negated. Most likely the political revolution against Stalinism in Russia will take an uneven development, in some areas it will be ahead of the others. Let us say in the Ukraine it is more developed, than in the other areas where the battle is raging, and we take power. INSTEAD OF USING THIS BASE IN SOVIET UKRAINE TO DRIVE DEEPER INTO THE REST OF RUSSIA AGAINST STALINISM, WE CALL FOR SEPARATION. This would be a body blow against the political revolution to smash the Stalinist enemies of the workers and other counter-revolutionary elements.

It is clear that our line of smashing deeper into the Soviet Union fundamentally contradicts the LINE of Trotsky for separation for the ENDS aimed at, ends that are not the DESIRES of the Ukrainian petty-bourgeoisie, but the INTERESTS OF THE WORKING CLASS.

Furthermore the "ideal variant" is not only brought in to cover up the false line of separation, but in order to leave the impression that this ideal variant is the presentation of Trotsky's position against us. In fact, we endorse this "ideal variant", and also present other variants in our original article, variants that are, most likely but not ideal. We presented this "ideal variant" which in reality is not a VARIANT but instead the END we strive toward through possible variants. In our first article which Trotsky is criticizing, he failed to quote the following:

"It is not too early to envisage the time when the yoke of exploitation will be smashed and the different sections of the Ukraine will be unified into a Soviet Ukraine. The precondition for this is the revolution in one or more advanced capitalist countries in Europe and the establishment of a Soviet system. This will be a beginning toward the consolidation of the United Socialist Soviets of Europe. Under this structure the present relation to the Soviet Union will be supplanted by a new and higher stage in which the Ukraine as an entity in its own right will be affiliated to the Eastern Soviet. Within this framework we can speak of a free independent Soviet Ukraine."

THE TRANSITION DEMANDS OF TROTSKYISM

In claiming we do not understand the Ukraine question, Trotsky says: "But just now there is no victorious revolution, instead there is a victorious reaction! To find the bridge from reaction to revolution---that is the task." Then he proceeds to tell us about the Transition Demands of the "Fourth International". This means that the slogan to separate the Ukraine from the Soviet Union is part of this Transi-

tion Program.

It is well that Trotsky brought out this program so clearly and revealed the proper connection between the Ukraine question and the Transition Demands. The whole axis of the Transition Demands is false and each separate demand (as we have pointed out in the Fourth International, vol. III #12) merely presents the concrete error in a given field.

We think it is no accident that Trotsky says that we must find the bridge from reaction to revolution. It is an outward manifestation of the false line of the Transition Demands, and not merely a poor formulation. The correct theoretical position is not the bridge from reaction to revolution; but the bridge from Capitalism (whether "reactionary" or "reformist") to the proletarian revolution. In a given situation, concretely, for a specific country the application of the line may be the relation from reaction through reform (both of which we oppose) to revolution. But the Transition Demands are the new WORLD PROGRAM OF THE TROTSKYITES. And the positions presented in the Transition Demands are for all countries.

Trotsky leaves out the whole question of reform. The Transition Program therefore brings it in through the back window by centrist formulation which result in REFORMIST DEEDS.

Let us consider the concrete errors of some important questions of the Transition Demands in the light of the "bridge" from Reaction to revolution.

1--HOW TO FIGHT CAPITALISM

"Fight Imperialism to Fight Fascism" says Trotsky in a letter published in the October 8, 1938 Socialist Appeal. Fight Capitalism to Fight Fascism is the correct position. In addition to the imperialists there are the small capitalist nations. Under this formulation the Trotskyites can cover up: 1) Support of Cardenas in Mexico against England, but not a word against U.S. IMPERIALISM. 2.) Support to the Peoples Front in Spain through MATERIAL AID and political criticism, etc. 3) Support of Chinese nationalists against Japan, etc. 4) Support a Labor Party, a third capitalist Party, against the imperialist parties, a slogan of the small capitalists against the big capitalists. 5) "Exploit the 60 families (United States) and the 200 families (France)".

2-- SUPPORT OF BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY AGAINST FASCISM

It is true that the Trotskyites reject the reformist position of outright support of bourgeois democracy, but they have a centrist, tail-endist position. Some of the more outstanding examples of this are the following which our literature has taken up in detail: -1) Trotsky's position on the Chinese situation where he states we may even have to support rotten bourgeois democracy against reaction, in order to defend our working class rights. But life itself proves that the working class can only defend its democratic rights by a STRUGGLE AGAINST bourgeois democracy and ALL of its institutions; likewise, the same applies in the struggle against fascism. 2) For the slogan of the Blum-Cacoin govern-

****Editor's Note-** This was an earlier RWL theoretical organ.

ment in France before Blum was in power. a slogan not based upon a Blum-Cachin government, THROUGH SOVIETS, but within the present capitalist structure. 3) The advocacy of the Caballero-CNT-UGT government in Spain right after the Barcelona uprising. 4) The support of the Mexican government against British imperialism. 5) The support of Labor Party candidates. 6) The support of bourgeois bills in Congress; e.g. the editorial of May 31, 1938 Socialist Appeal in support of the Wage and Hours Bill: "All sections of the labor movement do and must support the Bill".

3---THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MARXIAN ORGANIZATION.

1) The liquidation into the Socialist parties and centrist parties. 2) The support of the Labor (third capitalist) Party. 3.) The establishment of a PAPER Fourth International without even inviting the majority of its own affiliated sections to the conference, a one day conference to establish the new international. 4) The liquidation of the Marxian program of the party, which means the POLITICAL liquidation of the party no matter how long the party continues to exist organizationally.

4--THE STATE

1) The support of left bourgeois governments as already stated: Spain, China, Mexico, etc. 2) The advocacy of the support of a "left" labor government in the United States when it takes power. Cannon's slogan for a Workers and Farmers Government for the United States. 3) The Transition Program which states that it is correct to support left bourgeois governments on the road to power, before the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is established, as a step toward it; etc.

5--Revolutionary Defeatism

A consistently false formulation since the wrong position presented in the thesis War and the Fourth International, a position which reverts back to Trotsky's last war position, which Lenin fought. In short, it is a position that accepts the term revolutionary defeatism but fills it with a false content. Instead of advocating that the working class WORK for the defeat of its own imperialists, the Trotskyites advocate that the revolutionary action of the working class will defeat the imperialists. Instead of advocating the defeat of the government and its ARMED FORCES through military defeats, the Trotskyites advocate only the defeat of the government. But the one government can be defeated and the new "left" government such as Kerensky, can advocate the defense of the country.

Instead of stating that we work for the defeat of our own imperialist government and armed forces through revolutionary action, EVEN IF THIS MEANS THE MOMENTARY VICTORY OF THE "ENEMY" IMPERIALISTS: the Trotskyites advocate the defeat of our own imperialists as the lesser evil. Instead of pointing out that revolutionary defeatism is the LINE and is HOW the imperialist war will be turned into civil war, the Trotskyites present the position that revolutionary defeatism is synonymous with the slogan of turning the imperialist war into a civil war. The LINE of defeatism is the WHOLE, the slogan is a small part, even though important.

Instead of INDEPENDENT CLASS ACTION against capitalism and the imperialist war the Trotskyites center all their energy on

calling for the right to vote (Ludlow Amendment) to see if the country will go to war. This is parliamentary opportunism.

Trotsky's Centrism Vs. Marxism

We could give many more examples in practically every field on concrete activity where the Trotskyites have a non-Marxian position, have a centrist position. But the above is adequate to explain our point on some of the principled questions.

Notice that every one of the above Trotskyite formulations on concrete work fall into the category of Reaction vs. Revolution, but not into the Marxist line of Capitalism (reaction and REFORM) vs. the Proletarian Revolution. Because their whole Transition Program is merely the summing up of previous years of centrist positions and reformist actions, they have embodied in this Transition Program the Centrist position against REACTION, but not the MARXIST position against REFORM. As centrists they are left-reformers. They fight reformism, true enough, but they fight reformism from a centrist rather than from a Marxist position. And in order to drown us out from the left, they deliberately accuse us of being sectarian and ultra-lefts. If in principle we are to the right of the school of ultra-lefts, but to the left, IN PRINCIPLE, of the school of centrists, Trotskyites, etc., then what is our tendency? It is Marxism.

The Trotsky position for the Ukraine, for the petty bourgeois allies, is the counter-part to the new Trotsky position for the Negroes in the United States. They now advocate the right of self-determination in the Black Belt---if the Negroes want it.

The old Stalinist position on the Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasantry, which the Left Opposition fought, was later supplemented by its Stalinist counter-part in the United States with self-determination in the Black Belt. Trotsky now has the same centrist line in the Ukraine and in the South of the United States on the Negro question. The form, however, is different for the national question. But at least Trotsky has a CONSISTENT centrist position for international application.

Why A REPLY FROM TROTSKY?

For three years Trotsky has been silent on our criticism of his centrist program. Now all of a sudden he explains how sectarian and muddle-headed we are. WHY? And why the Ukraine question? Why not many other principled questions we have in dispute?

It must be remembered that on the eve of our expulsion from his movement he sent four letters to the United States section: one to the Cannon faction, one to the Shachtman faction, one to the Luste faction, and one to the Left Wing. Summed up they made one whole; that the Left Wing of the Workers Party and Oehler were STRIKEBREAKERS because we accused the leadership of planning to liquidate into the Socialist Party, a liquidation we opposed to say nothing about the many other principled questions in dispute. These letters were published in volume I, # 3 of our publication. Just the word from Trotsky that we were strike-breakers was enough to cement the groups against us, and since the Pope had spoken we were doomed to quick expulsion. For that was all Cannon was waiting for to give us the axe.

From then until now Trotsky left us alone, except once when Shactman tried to polemicize against us and again burned his finger; and once when Trotsky played Eiffel and Oehler on the question. But the R.W.L. had expelled Eiffel for the position Trotsky accused us of having. Now comes the Ukraine question.

He says we are only sectarians and muddle-heads---not opportunists like Vereeken and Sneevliet; that we will not live long enough to develop to that stage. We will live long, longer than capitalism, because we present a Marxist line and have established ourselves INTERNATIONALLY as a part of a tendency (Marxism) separate from all varieties of ultra-lefts as well as the rainbow collection of centrists.

What Trotsky is really doing, even though we give him credit for understanding the importance of the Ukraine question, (which we can not say for his followers such as Cannon, Shactman and others), is presenting a FLANK ATTACK upon our international tendency. In the United State and in Europe we have given the Trotskyites more than a battle. Now we have the provisional INTERNATIONAL CONTACT COMMISSION, and although Trotsky can say he never heard of it, he cannot really deny that he has heard of what is going on (just as he can say that the Marxist is a "tiny" publication, even though it has a circulation of over half that of the Trotskyite New International) in his European sections, as well as his Mexican section, right under his nose. He at least knows that they have developed fractions that for some unknown reason present the same fundamental arguments as the R.W.L.

Trotsky has no time to discuss our differences with him on revolutionary defeatism, on support of left-bourgeois governments, on support of third capitalist parties, etc, etc, but he does have time to take up our position on the Ukraine question. We are very glad to hear from him on this. We think he has done the revolutionary movement a service to reveal even clearer Trotsky's centrist position on the Ukraine question, as a further indication of his entire centrist line.

September 25, 1939

Imperialism is the most prostituted, and, at the same time, perfected form of the state which the bourgeoisie, having attained its fullest development, transforms into a weapon for the enslavement of labor by capital.

--Karl Marx

BRITISH ANALYSIS OF ELECTIONS

By TOM COWAN

Ed. Note: This article, taken from "WORKERS REVIEW," organ of the Socialist Workers Group of Great Britain, presents a Marxian analysis of the English elections earlier this year. Unlike the Trotskyists, whose British section last year liquidated their organization completely into the British Labor Party, the SWG despite many difficulties carries on the banner of independent workers' action, and in this article exposes the reactionary nature of the Labor Party government, and calls for a new Revolutionary Marxist Party. In view of the reactionary role of the Labor Party in the present international situation (Korea, etc.), we feel readers of the INTERNATIONAL NEWS will find this analysis of the Labor Party "at home" of great interest.

One of the few values of a Bourgeois Parliamentary Election is that it acts as a barometer, registering the development of class consciousness amongs the masses. It also ascertains in what direction, left or right, the social forces of the country are developing. The effects of the various economic and political developments upon the classes can be gauged through the election results of the different parties, who reflect their interests, or their supposed interests. It is from this standpoint of determining the changes in class forces and the relationship of classes, that we analyse the General Election. On the basis of such an analysis, we can determine our propaganda and tactics with the view of influencing the mass of workers along the road to Socialist Revolution. Understanding to what social questions the masses are particularly sensitive, and consequently what questions the advanced workers are most concerned with, we can, with this knowledge, determine what questions Marxists must emphasise upon to effectively counteract capitalist propaganda, and attract workers towards our policy. To do this, we must first analyse the facts as presented by the elections.

FACTS AND FIGURES

The total poll of 84% of the registered electorate, an increase of 11% over the 1945 poll, can be considered as significant insofar as it reflects a growing consciousness on the part of the masses, as to their social interests. This greater awareness of the masses, of the political and economic forces of the day, although blurred and distorted, nevertheless reveals a greater activity and political interest on their part, that may have substantial effect upon future class struggles. The increased poll is represented by 3,092,763 votes, of which the Conservatives polled 2,361,218 votes, the Labor Party polled 1,210,802 votes, and the Liberals obtained 368,658 votes. The excess of votes polled by the Labour, Conservatives, and the Liberals was helped by a swing towards them of votes previously cast for Independents and Communists. The I.L.P. Labour Independents, Independents and Communists lost all their seats, and gained none. All together they lost 84,722 votes.

The C.P. in particular suffered disastrous defeat. In 1945, the C.P. entered 21 candidates, and polled 102,780 votes, and won two seats. On Feb. 23rd, 1950, they entered 100 candidates gaining no new seats, and losing the only two they had. Although they--the C.P.--entered 80% more candidates than in 1945, they only polled 91,746 votes, that is 11,034 less, a drop of approximately 10% compared with 1945. The Stalinist ex-M.P. W. Gallacher, after representing W. Fife for 15 years, lost his seat to Labour, with a drop of over 8,000 votes, the majority of

which went to Labour. Even the Tory in W. Fife increased his poll by over 1,500 votes. In Rhondda East, Pollitt's vote dropped by over 11,000, the majority again going to Labour. In Stepney, Piratin lost his seat owing to redivision of the constituency and the large Catholic and Docker vote, which won for Labour.

One thing above all else is clear: the masses have been directly influenced against the Stalinists and Labour Independents of all brands. A clear cut decision for Labour has been made by the working class. The Liberals although increasing their poll by 1% lost 2 seats. The abstentions of Liberals from all except safe Liberal seats would not have effected to any great extent the net gains in seats by one party to the other. In fact, contrary to general understanding it is reckoned that Labour would have made a net gain of only 14 seats if the Liberals had stood down in 48 Constituencies. The general trend has been for Labour to consolidate its hold in the industrial areas and over the rural labourers, while the suburban middle class has definitely swung en masse over to the Tories. An example of this swing to the Tories and the hold retained by Labour over the agriculture Labourers is provided by the "Observer" which states:

"Poole is a typically 'bourgeois' area---. If we compare the four county constituencies of 1945, with the three county constituencies of 1950, one finds that Labour has increased its total poll by 16%, while the Conservatives poll has increased by 19%. Put Poole back---Labour has increased its poll by 14%, but the Conservatives have increased theirs by 17%". The "Observer" concludes that: "only substantial swing towards the Conservatives has been in the residential middle class areas."

In the majority of regions Labour has increased its poll, but the Tory increase in votes has been greater, so increasing the Tory percentage of total votes over the 1945 poll whilst the Labor percentage of total votes has decreased relative to 1945.

A further example of the middle class swing towards Toryism is provided by such middle class London "Dormitory" constituencies as Hendon N. & S. Richmond, Croydon E. N. & W. and eleven other such seats. In 1945 Labour won 7 seats out of the 15, which now constitute 17 seats owing to redistribution. In 1950 Labour won only one (Watford) out of the 17 seats increasing its poll in this area by 5.4% over the 1945 poll whilst the Tories increased theirs by 42%.

The Agriculture Labourers continued support for Labour is reflected in the I.P. increased poll in agricultural areas. Northolk, a pre-1945 Tory stronghold, Labour held its 1945 gains. In Dorset, as we have quoted above, in the instance of Poole, Labour greatly increased its poll, whilst the Tory vote fell. In Wiltshire Labour polled 10.6 greater than in 1945, whilst the Tory increase was 9.2%.

The changed balance of social forces can be summed up thus: Labour has held and increased its poll amongst the Agricultural and industrial proletariat. The Left tendency amongst the industrial workers, as reflected in the support of the Stalinists, I.L.P. and other independents has reverted back to Labourism. The Conservatives, and the Liberals to a lesser extent, have increased their poll through a middle class swing away from Labour. We must now give a short analysis of the forces giving rise to this swing by the middle class and the agricultural workers and industrial workers continued support for Labourism.

WHY THE RIGHT SWING?

During the first few years after the end of the 2nd Imperialist world war, the Workers and Middle Class in Europe swung to the Left. The Stalinists and Social-Democrat strength and influence reached its peak. Left coalition govts. were the order of the day in Italy, France, etc. In Britain a Labour Govt. was elected and the Stalinists were relatively strong and influential. However, since the end of 1946, there has been a marked trend to the Right not only in Europe, but throughout all the advanced Capitalist nations of the World.

To discover the reason for this general trend we must examine the international situation and developments, for the form this Right trend takes in each country; we must examine the peculiarities of the country against the background of: the post war boom, Marshall aid, American loans, and economic juggling has enabled World Capitalism to temporarily stabilize its economy, providing a relatively high standard of employment and relative prosperity for the workers.

Temporary economic stabilization, and the class collaborationist policies pursued by the Centrists and Stalinists, particularly in the early post war years and the lack of a Revolutionary alternative to the opportunists, provided the predominant factors leading to the Right wing trend on the part of the middle class and the continued allegiance of the workers to Labourism. Such are the reasons for the International Right-Wing trend of the masses.

* * * * *

The right swing of the middle class was the direct result of their decline in wealth and social standing. The petty restrictions, red tape, rationing of food and petrol, taxation, etc., introduced and maintained by the Labor Govt. to the benefit of Monopoly Capitalism, inevitably affected the middle class more than any other class. The State Capitalist policy of Labourism, designed to maintain the Capitalist system, gives priority to the big capitalist over the small capitalist; monopoly capitalism has an extended lease on life at the expense of the middle and working classes. The acclamations of the Stalinists, Left Labourites and the opportunists that Labourism is progressive, "a step to Socialism," has the effect of repelling the middle class from genuine Socialism and forcing them into the hands of Monopoly Capitalism, their greatest foe. The historical process of impoverishment of the middle class under capitalism is not understood by that class, and instead of clarifying this issue the Labourite supporters assist capitalism in obscuring it, and keeping the middle class a faithful supporter of capitalism.

The working class on the other hand, given full employment and a regular income, (due not to the Labour Government but to the success of capitalism's temporary economic stabilisation and post war boom) have continued to support Labourism. The Labourites, and all their so-called "critical" supporters of the past and present, exploited to the full, present day conditions of relatively full employment, etc. They continually contrasted the "bad old days" of Toryism with these "Good" days of Labour. Instead of pointing out that the "Bad" and "Good" days are due directly to the Capitalist economy, and not to any parties' specific design, the opportunists Labour supporters gave credence to the Labourites lying pronouncements by declaring: Support Labour to keep the Tories (and bad old days) out. The inability of Labour as with Toryism to determine the chaotic capitalist economy; to determine the degree of employment, was slurred over and the reformist ideology of gradual social improvements and planning under Capitalism, was supported.

The post-war period of relative, but only temporary, stabilisation of capitalist economy and the subsequent raising of the workers living standards and a high level of employment has reflected itself on the political plane in the form of strengthening the capitalist right wing, and the reformist, war mongering parties. Assisted by the so-called left, whose class collaborationist policies and opportunism have enabled capitalism to successfully avert the growth of a revolutionary movement, and the growth of a revolutionary Marxist trend amongst the politically advanced workers. All efforts to develop a genuine Marxists organisation have been stifled through widespread opportunism permeating the ranks of the workers.

On the basis of the above analysis, what in the form of propaganda and activity is demanded from Revolutionary Marxists, to advance towards the building of the Marxist Party? How does the struggle of Marxists stand in relation to the election results, and the balance of the Tory and Labour Parties in Parliament and the approaching economic slump? The balance of forces in Parliament puts the new Labour Govt. in a precarious position; a balance of forces that can easily be upset necessitating another General Election. However the discussion of Labour to continue in office is not so crazy as may appear at first sight.

The Labour Govt. balanced in its small majority, will have an advantage in serving capitalism. Now the Labourites, T.U. bureaucrats, and the cringing opportunists and Left Labour supporters can plead the safety of "our Labour Govt." to be in great danger of collapse if the workers do not forge wage increases, etc. Greater now will be the cry: don't endanger or embarrass "our" Labour Govt. and "its" prosperity policy. On the basis of these factors it appears most probable, that for a time, Labour will try and hold office, putting off all promised reforms and further nationalisation steps (which they would have put off in any case) pleading the lack of a large enough majority.

The opposition for a while at least, to the development of a militant mass movement is strengthened; but history has decided that the present act of the Labour Govt. marks the beginning of its end. The developing slump and its obvious consequences will tend to weaken Capitalism as a whole, and strengthen the forces of Socialist Revolution. The "tendency" will be to weaken capitalism and its agents; BUT FAILING THE BUILDING OF A MARXIST PARTY AND MASS MILITANT MOVEMENT THE RESULTS OF A SLUMP MAY BE THE CRUSHING OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE EMBARKATION BY WORLD IMPERIALISM IN A PREDATORY WAR AGAINST RUSSIA.

The course for Marxists cannot be other than that which has been pursued by the S.W.L. and its predecessor the R.W.A. since 1945. A policy of no support for the Labour Govt. and concentrated to an even greater extent upon exposing the true nature of the Labor Govt. of revealing, and patiently explaining that the past five years of full employment, relative prosperity, and reforms, has been due to post war boom conditions and that a SLUMP IS INEVITABLE IRRESPECTIVE OF WHICH PARTY IS IN OFFICE.

The overriding economic factors in determining "prosperity", "impoverishment," etc., must be consistently pointed out, that no Party based on Capitalist economy can avert a slump, and that Capitalism, whether it trades with West or East, inevitably breeds war, poverty and chaos. The illusion that Labourism is Socialism must be exposed, before any militant movement can be developed. One of the surest ways of exposing the true Capitalist nature of Labourism, is through assisting and whole heartedly supporting the workers wage actions, etc. One example of workers

taking action and the Labor Govt's vicious reaction in defense of capitalist profits does more to enlighten the masses, than hundreds of "demands" and "resolutions" for anti-capitalist action from the L.G. which only serves to confuse the masses and hides the true nature of Labourism. Independent class action by the workers is the only positive method, of destroying the illusions in reformism and its agents of the "centre" and of the Left wing in general.

The exposure of the nature of the C.P. as an instrument of Russian Stalinism; of being petty-bourgeois in organization and policy and not a genuine Communist Party is of utmost necessity in fighting Capitalism and its anti-Socialist war mongering policy. The anti-Socialist nature of Stalinist totalitarianism in Eastern Europe and Russia must be exposed, pointing out at the same time, the difference in content between Fascism and Stalinism Totalitarianism; that Fascism is based upon Capitalism, whereas Stalinism is a cancerous and parasitical growth upon the Russian socialized economy which is being seriously undermined by Stalinism.

Independent Revolutionary Working Class action alone can ensure progress to Socialism. Only a strong consistent working class offensive, in the form of a mass militant movement fighting against Capitalist wage cuts, unemployment, etc., can successfully rally the middle class to the side of revolutionary socialism. But the workers can do little unless freed from the Bourgeois reformist ideology, freed from the tenacious hold of opportunism and lead by a genuine revolutionary Marxist Party. The building of such a party must be the first concern of all genuine Revolutionists today.

Cannon and "Mass Work"

PART 4

A SUPPRESSED CHAPTER
FROM THE HISTORY OF TROTSKYISM

by HUGO OEHLER

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THE PITTSBURGH PLENUM

Cannon's "History" dealing with the Pittsburgh Plenum was not factual to say the least. He says, "The Active Workers' Conference we tried at Pittsburgh was a horrible fizzle because, from the very opening of it, the Oehlerites used it as a sounding board for their struggle against 'opportunism' of the leadership." (P. 200) Speaking of day to day class activity, Cannon says, "These sectarians were not interested in such humdrum matters." (P. 201) On the contrary, the facts are just the opposite. The Left Wing not only had a position on the trade union question, unemployment, branch activity, and all other day to day activity, but correctly also we wanted to discuss such things as the war in Ethiopia and China which was in full blast, and on which the majority leadership refused to take a position one way or the other, even though the Left Wing had documents on these questions before the top committee.

Cannon claims that it was an ACTIVE WORKERS' CONFERENCE. This is true. But when he says that we were not taking up the other questions here, he has forgotten facts. The agenda as adopted in New York before the top committee left for Pittsburgh included the big political questions TOO. But Cannon and Shachtman did not want a showdown on these fundamental questions. So they were sidetracked by a filibuster by the Cannon-Shachtman forces. They wanted more time to prepare their sell-out and liquidation into the Socialist Party. I submit as evidence a letter written at the conference, at that time, from Pittsburgh, to comrade Basky giving him a report. Remember this is not hindsight. This letter was written at the time of the conference, and answers Cannon's "History" written over 8 years later.

Dear Comrade Basky:

I am sending you a brief report of the March Pittsburgh Plenum which was just concluded, leaving little to add to our previous estimation with the exception of rounding out the picture.

In short, the struggle revolved around the concepts and practical steps of what KIND of a party we are going to build and our perspective toward the Fourth International. The surface explosion brought out the NC position which stated that the main danger was from the left - and a motion was passed endorsing the line of the PC, condemning the line of Oehler and Stamm, instructing the PC to wage a war on this "sectarian pseudo-left tendency" in New York. They condemned the "line" before they considered the political differences. The whole procedure and the fight clearly revealed that this was a big concession on their part to the right element in the party.

The Plenum and active workers' conference clearly proved that there is a danger in the party from the right, that the right element is beginning to crystallize, that the old CIA group (Cannon, Shachtman, Swabeck and Lewitt)

are moving to the right. The left forces must unite and carry thru a struggle to build the party as a revolutionary Marxian party and to crystalize the Marxian core of the party. In fact the division on the dozen or so political and organizational issues before the Plenum were the concrete manifestations of the concept of the kind of party we want to build.

You remember the PC sent a letter to all branches about the active workers conference. This letter presented a political agenda. However the NC endeavored to make the active workers conference a shop talk--and succeeded. The conference started a day late. The following was the plan of the NC majority: Sat. morning NC meeting (closed); afternoon Muste report & youth report to active workers conference; evening, NC meeting (closed). Sunday morning, trade union & unemployment report; afternoon, discussion on report & reports of branches, evening, mass meeting. Monday, NC meeting (closed).

Such a plan left absolutely no time for real discussion and for a real active workers conference. A revolt took place at the very opening & a vote of 44 to 27 recommended that the NC change the agenda. They demanded more time for political discussion, more sessions of the active workers conference, right to cast consultative vote, etc. The NC retreated and gave them more "rights", more sessions, but no consultative vote. Of course Oehler & Stamm were blamed for the whole thing. This gave them an excuse for the fight against the left.

The fight vs. us was carried on as follows:- After the opening session & revolt in the active workers conference they held an all-night session of the NC - a filibuster like we had in the CLA conference & they told the boys how bad we really were. No political arguments, just slander & subjective points. Then they passed the motion vs. us referred to before. This motion on organization & condemnation of our "line" was passed BEFORE our line was considered. The majority of the dozen or so disputes had not even been considered. Of course that was their strategy: first condemn us & then consider the political question under a cloud. Before the vote vs. us a couple of points were raised & we obtained real support from some members of the NC (on the merits of the arguments) but after the vote they voted vs. us, afraid of being classified in the so-called Oehler camp. Shachtman, the reporter for the NC at the active workers conference, speaking of the left danger clearly established the fact of the existence of the right danger (his clumsy presentation) of which he came out as its ideological & political leader. Cannon shamefully swallowed all of this.

After the NC instructed the PC to war on us in NY they passed another motion for Oehler to leave for Illinois within two weeks. They first send me out of town & then carry on the ideological fight vs. us.

The political issues of the Plenum, in the main, were referred back to the PC again. No position was taken on the majority of disputes & on some issues motions that covered part & not the most important part of the problems were passed. TRADE UNION. Our amendments to the Swaback program of action carried. Swaback & Oehler thesis on tactics & strategy, 2 different positions, were referred to the PC. LABOR PARTY. NC adopted a correct position. Our first amendment to the draft carried, calling for a clause which stated that in the main in this period of capitalism the organization of a labor party would be reactionary. Our 2nd amendment asking them to strike out the word "reformist" in "reformist labor" party lost by 5 to 4 vote (before censure).

JP said he was opposed to reformist labor party & class struggle labor party but could conceive of a revolutionary labor party. That was the basis for our proposed amendment. Minneapolis election: correct position,--a compromise position but the relation of forces there demanded it. SOCIALIST PARTY variant: The West resolution not considered. The Oehler vs. Swabeck resolutions were referred to the PC. Five motions were adopted that as first steps are correct, culled from our resolution, but these steps are not within a framework or general direction. Concealed within these five motions are 2 opposite positions--ours & the Swabeck-Shachtman-Cannon SP orientation. The RUSSIAN QUESTION. Shachtman vs. Oehler resolutions turned over to PC. INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATIONS. Big step forward. Workers Party, Dutch Party, ICL & other groups & parties standing on the same programmatic base & working for the 4th should carry on preliminary work for the establishment of an international Buro. Also we send delegate as soon as possible to Europe (delegate "at large"). Approved Young Spartacus affiliation to Youth Buro. In case of war NC can speed up establishment of Buro without Convention. Establishment of internal international Bulletin for material from Europe approved; amendment to include American material defeated! UNEMPLOYMENT WORK. Many practical steps taken. They voted down my proposal to reject title "Workers Security Bill" as false. ROLL CALL VOTE. Voted down. DAILY PAPER. Shachtman's proposal & my counter proposal were not considered. Motions passed instructing PC to check up & report back. REFERRED TO PC: The following points on the agenda were not considered: Language branches; Internal Bulletin; Three month probation; Build Labor Defense organization; Organize National Training School; action vs. right element such as Calverton, L. Lore, Budenz, etc.; War Danger, etc.

The mention of the need of a Negro Thesis by Williamson & Watson & others was ridiculed. Mention of the fact that NM refused to print article on Abyssinian dispute was ridiculed--nothing to do with America. But just as we arrived in NY there was a race riot in Harlem. A contributing factor to these struggles was the Abyssinian developments.

All in all the leadership moved to the right & a good section of the rank & file moved to the left. We gained new support. Not the so-called Oehler faction but the new left element of which we are an important part, the left wingers, the genuine internationalists.

Since the majority of the issues were not settled we will continue a fight in proper party channels for our point of view. What progress the Plenum did make was largely due to the pressure of the left element. The Chicago boys, Glotzer & Satir, played a miserable role. A straddle of the fence position between the 2 main contending forces. Satir would be far better off if he could break away from that Chicago clique that holds him down.

Well, the war is on vs. Basky, Stamm & Oehler--so while I am out of town, not by my wishes but by instructions, you comrades will have to see that this right element does not get the upper hand.

Comradely,
Hugo Oehler

In Cannon's "History" he claims that the "sectarians" did not want to discuss the practical problems--only the high, far-away problems. But our letter of that date proves that the left wing not only wanted a Plenum verdict against

the top committee's inaction and blundering on the big international questions, but that the left wing wanted decisions on the following day to day problems as well, and that the majority of these issues were side-tracked and sent back to the top committee because they were afraid to debate with us on these issues at that Plenum: 1- Trade Union Question; 2- Labor Party; 3- Socialist Party; 4- Unemployment work; 5- Daily Paper; 6- Language Branches; 7- Labor Defense; 8- Training School; 9- Fight on Right Element; 10- Negro Thesis.

Here were more than ten day to day class struggle issues, on which the Left Wing had a position, against the blundering, do-nothing top committee. But while we pressed to bring these issues on the floor, they either emasculated them, or as in most cases, succeeded in getting a majority vote to refer it back to the top committee. The so-called Cannon "mass work" was so many words spun out of the whole cloth.

MUSTE'S ROLE

At the Pittsburgh Plenum of the Workers Party, Cannon was able to line up Muste and his forces to vote for a censure and for other measures against the left wing. We did not accuse Cannon of an unprincipled bloc. We were all in one party, under one declaration of principles and the NEW issues of principles (the so-called "French Turn" of the international Trotskyist movement, etc.) were not voted on or decided one way or the other--yet. So blocs within this framework that did not jump over principle boundaries, right or wrong, could not be labelled "unprincipled". We understood that Muste had individual integrity, but was a "babe in the woods" when it came to maneuvering with seasoned politicians who had travelled through the factional fights of the foundation and development periods of the Communist Party, like Cannon and others. We regretted that he cast his lot with Cannon against us, but we had a principled fight to win or lose, to keep the party or to liquidate it, and we set our line of march accordingly.

THE LEFT WING VS. THE LIQUIDATORS

World events moved on, with mankind moving closer toward revolution and war. And the forces that were supposed to be working toward a Fourth International capable of coping with the situation were instead paving the way for the victory of reaction, and capitalist anarchy with all its disastrous consequences of the last fifteen years. The attempts of the workers to break through the chain of defeats by forging a new party of victory, free from the opportunism and corruption of the Socialist and Stalinist Internationals, were again thrown back. Section by section, the core of the new international of revolutionary Marxism, the International Communist League, in each and every country was liquidated into the traitorous Second International, with Leon Trotsky in the "leadership." In the United States, Cannon and Shachtman played the miserable role of faithful stooges. They were stooges, because they had no THEORETICAL OR POLITICAL INDEPENDENT position of their own on the vital INTERNATIONAL issues of the day.

The fight continued for Marxism. We fought against the stream, we of the Left Wing. Under the death blows of Stalinism in the labor movement, and the hammer blows of fascism growing on a world scale, the working class was bled white on both sides. In the battle for self-preservation, groups, factions and parties, peoples and ideologies were moving to the right. In this swift current, we of the Left Wing fought for our convictions, our principles, against the growing opportunism and hysteria. Many died politically, many became wards of capitalism.

and the manner of working ...

--aiding the labor bureaucrats against the rank and file, aiding reaction in special Senate and other witch-hunting investigations, etc. But the Left Wing, and later the Revolutionary Workers League, U.S., continued and continues to hold high the banner of working-class freedom, of Revolutionary Marxism.

THE JUNE PLENUM

In the Workers Party of 1935, events and struggles moved on toward the June Plenum in New York. Readers of Cannon's "History" now learn from Trotsky's "disciple" himself, that he and his forces came away from Pittsburgh determined to rid the party of the left wing. But in those days such a confession would have been heresy. In those days he and his followers continued to deny that they intended to liquidate the Workers Party into the Socialist Party--until after they defeated us and succeeded in winning over Muste. Now in his book, after the events, he becomes careless and speaks of the SP orientation and "liquidation" even before Pittsburgh. The truth will out.

Cannon rages against the "unprincipled bloc" of Muste and Oehler at the June plenum (p. 210 to 216), and many other things that facts prove to the contrary. Cannon claims we had a bloc. This is not true. We had a working agreement on several secondary but important issues, nothing more. Not that it would have been wrong or unprincipled to form such a bloc, but we could not get agreement on our principle issues--therefore there was no bloc. But Cannon has to build his case, regardless of facts. He first has to claim he had a minority at the June Plenum so that he can later show that by his genius three months afterwards, he was able to win Muste over, isolate the left wing, and expel them with the help of Muste. His genius and "leadership", however, would not look so good later on in his "History" if factual reports were presented about the June Plenum.

THE MYTH OF THE MUSTE-OEHLER "BLOC"

By June Muste began to realize that Cannon intended to expel us, as part of his drive toward liquidation of the Workers Party. Therefore, he, as National Secretary, with his caucus, refused to be partners in expelling some of our members and "putting the others on ice"--smashing the left wing. For this action, completely independent on Muste's part, Cannon accused him of an unprincipled bloc with the left then. But now, in his book, Cannon raises the charge of unprincipled relations against the Left Wing.

It must be remembered that as members of the Workers Party we were all united under the Declaration of Principles of the party. Muste had no differences with these principles. He wanted to build the party, as a working-class party based on Marxism, independent of and against Social Democracy and Stalinism. So did we of the Left Wing. But the Cannon-Shachtman group had committed themselves in the Communist League of America, before the fusion with Muste's American Workers Party to form the new Workers Party, to support of Trotsky's liquidationist line of independent revolutionary Marxist forces into Social Democracy. In this situation, therefore, although we had a common origin with Cannon and Shachtman in the CLA, we had now much more in common with Muste. We now had a principle difference with Cannon and Shachtman, who wanted to liquidate the WP, and an agreement with Muste to BUILD the WP.

It is too bad we could not get a bloc with Muste. I was mostly out of town, as the Pittsburgh letter to Basky will show, but it was not the fault of Basky, Stamm and others in New York that we did not get such a bloc. Cannon uses

the term "unprincipled bloc" but fails to give a political definition of this. He slanders Muste and us. If you bloc with someone with whom you have a ~~PRINCIPLED~~ ~~DIFFERENCE~~, against someone with whom you do not have a principled difference--that is an unprincipled bloc.

We had no bloc. If we had made a bloc with Cannon and Shachtman against Muste on the SP orientation--that would have been unprincipled. But if we had made a bloc--and unfortunately it was not consummated--with Muste to save the PARTY on the basis of the Declaration of Principles against the liquidators--that would have been principled. Cannon makes a false statement, and then labels this false statement unprincipled.

The Muste-Oehler bloc, says Cannon (page 214), was broken under the hammer blows of DISCUSSION. This is not the truth. There was no bloc, and there was no DISCUSSION. I will quote letters and documents of THAT TIME TO PROVE THIS. We were expelled by bureaucratic measures from the top, sending Oehler and others out of the center, majority top action against our members, lies and slander thrown against us in order to win Muste over to their position. They used him against the Left Wing, against those who wanted to build an independent party of the American working-class, to smash the backbone of all resistance to the liquidators. They used him for their immediate needs, only to dump him later as the Stalinists do with their "friends." It is one of their greatest crimes against the American workers, that Cannon and Shachtman helped drive a man of Muste's calibre and potentialities, back to religion. But it is a case where they try to wear the lily white robe and put the black robe on Muste. Facts won't substantiate this Cannon-Shachtman version. Like the Socialists and Stalinists, Trotskyites in their revision of Marxism help drive leftward-moving elements back to different levels of capitalist --ideological degradation.

(To Be Continued)

LENIN ON "UNITY"

The collapse of the Second International "which means the complete victory of opportunism, the transformation of the Social-Democratic parties into national-liberal labour parties, is only a result of the entire historical epoch of the Second International"... "a transition period from the completion in Western Europe of bourgeois and national revolutions to the beginning of Socialist revolutions..." "The crisis that was created by the great war...has shown opportunism in its true role as an ally of the bourgeoisie. A complete separation of the labour parties from this element, a definite organizational break, has become a necessity. The imperialist epoch cannot tolerate the existence in one party of an advance-guard of the revolutionary proletariat on the one hand, and of the semi, petty-bourgeois aristocracy of the working class which enjoys crumbs from the privileges of the "great nation" situation on the other."

From "The Collapse of the Second International" (1915)